

# ON THE BANKS OF BENARAS



*Varanasi, one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world and the abode of Lord Shiva, is the spiritual beating heart of India, set on the banks of the Ganges. For centuries Varanasi has been attracting intrepid travellers keen to understand the traditions and faith of this complex culture. Drift by the ghats where the saffron robed Brahmin priests, men and women are all immersed in the rituals of this sacred city. Wander the lively narrow lanes and visit the many colourful stalls peddling local arts and crafts, spices and world famous silks.*

***A special treat: Experience a unique (Covid-safe) Holi Celebration in a Benarasi village!***

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Enjoy a special Holi celebration in Varanasi**
- **Enjoy sunrise & sunset cruise on the Ganges**
- **Experience the magic of a Ganga Aarti**
- **Participate in a clay workshop by BHU students**
- **Enjoy a local food trail of the city**
- **Experience an immersive textile tour of Benaras**

## ITINERARY

### Day 1- 18 March - Varanasi Arrival (L,D)

All arrivals to reach Varanasi by 1100 hours.

On arrival, you will be met airport and from here we will head to Madhopur village, about 1 hour from the airport.

#### **Holi in Benaras**

Our destination is Swaraj Ashram which is located about 15 kms from Varanasi in Madhopur village along the banks of Ganga. We will visit the adjoining farms with the village folks. And the highlight – we will be organizing a simple, yet fun (and safe) Holi celebration with the villagers, using herbal colour. Enjoy a traditional Holi lunch at the Ashram.

Along with a visit to the farms, where you will meet and interact with some locals and farmers in their field, you will also visit an ancient temple near the Ashram. As per tradition, after Holi in the evening we will sing holi songs together (with local folk musicians) and drink traditional Thandai .

Return to the hotel in time for dinner.

Check in and Dinner at the hotel or in a local restaurant.

You will be booked at the **Hotel Taj Ganges** or similar for a stay of 3 nights.

### Day 2- 19 March - Varanasi (B,L,D)

An early morning in the holy city!

5:30 am - A traditional start of the morning by invoking the natural elements, accompanied by Vedic chants – experience the surreal early **morning Ganga Aarti** and Yagya at Assi Ghat along with a calm sunrise boat tour This is an experience India's finest mornings while riding calmly on the Ganga!

Post the boat tour, we will go on a **City of Good life walk**

Understand the unique lifestyle elements of the oldest living city in the world. Also visit a Kushti Akhara, a 450 year old house of Tulsi Das ji. We will end the trip with a traditional breakfast of Kachori sabzi and Jalebi.

A perfect Varanasi morning.

Post breakfast, we will experience a unique **CLAY pottery workshop**. In this pottery session, local artists will first introduce us to the process of clay preparation, types of the clay, the wheel, firing the pots and of course creative ideas on pot making! You will get hands on practice and get an opportunity to make your own pot. You will also get a chance to interact with the budding artists of the studio and see their work too.

Later, we will head out for a **Varanasi food walk**



Our walk through the lanes of Varanasi provides a wonderful overview of Varanasi's history, culture, and role as India's spiritual capital while exploring the gallis, markets, and ghats with their several hidden gems including some lip-

smacking street food. Varanasi's street food is well known among visiting pilgrims, locals and tourists. Enjoy local delicacies like Masala Chai, Lassi, Chaat Paan and of course local Malaiyo.

This evening, we complete our spiritual day in Benares with a serene **sunset boat tour on the Ganga**. We will watch the sun set behind the beautiful Ghats after which you will experience the **marvelous spectacle of a Ganga Aarti darshan**.



A day well spent!

We will then head out to a local restaurant for dinner, before returning to the hotel.

Overnight at the hotel.

### **Day 3- 20 March - Varanasi (B,L,D)**

After a leisurely breakfast, we will depart for a tour of **Sarnath** this morning.



Understand the life-story and teachings of Buddha at the place where he delivered his first sermon 2,550 years ago!  
Return to Varanasi for a local lunch.

Post lunch we will enjoy an immersive **Textile Trail of Banaras**. Banarasi Handcrafted Silk is enough to evoke romance in a person. This romance starts from the inception of design to weavers' focussed effort every day, to the person who wears and is at last seen as a twinkle in the eyes of the observer. But to know this loom can transform the way you look at clothing! Visit the premium & vintage designer handloom and explore traditional designs.



Post dinner in a local restaurant, we will head back to the hotel.

#### **Day 4- 21 March - Varanasi departure**

This morning, the transfer to the airport will be arranged for you as per your flight timings.

**\*\* Return home with wonderful memories of your holiday \*\***

**Price per person on a twin-sharing basis: Rs 71,950**

**Single supplement: Rs 12,000**

#### **Inclusions**

- 3 nights accommodation in the hotel mentioned or similar
- Daily Breakfast
- All meals from Lunch on Day 1 to Breakfast on Day 4
- Services of a tour escort
- A local guide throughout the tour
- Holi Celebration Benarasi style
- Morning and evening Ganga Arti
- A unique clay workshop by local artisans
- All entrance fees
- All local permits & taxes

#### **Exclusions**

- Airfare to Varanasi & back
- Tips to the driver / guide
- Drinks with meals
- Items of a personal nature
- Anything not specifically mentioned under “Inclusions”
- 5% GST

#### **Please note:**

- Due to Covid restrictions, we may need to re-plan the itinerary and it may require certain cost adjustments.
- All guests are required to get a Covid Test done and sent to us within 72 to 48 hours prior to departure.
- The cost is based on 8 people travelling together.



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#### **BOOKINGS AND PAYMENTS**

1. A deposit of Rs 10,000 per person is payable at the time of booking to block your seat on the tour.
2. Balance payment has to be made 30 days prior to the start of the tour
3. At the time of making the balance / full payment, please send us a copy of your ID proof (Aadhar Card / Driving Licence)

#### **CANCELLATION & REFUNDS**

1. **Payment of the booking deposit constitutes acceptance of our terms and conditions**
2. We require a minimum of **6 guests** to operate the tour. In case we do not get the minimum number of guests, the deposit paid will be refunded in full
3. The Balance / Full payment will be collected 30 days prior only when we get the minimum number of guests to operate the tour
4. Cancellation of any reservations are subject to the following conditions:
  - Cancellation effected after paying the booking deposit & within 30 days of start of the tour: Full refund
  - Cancellation effected between 30 and 15 days of start of the tour: An administrative service charge equivalent to the initial booking deposit of Rs 10,000 will be levied\*
  - Cancellation effected within 10 days of start of the tour: 100% of the tour cost will be levied as cancellation charges\*
  - **\*Cancellation charges will be waived if the guest can find a replacement person to join the tour**
  - No refund will be due after commencement of travel
5. Cancellation due to Covid (prior to the tour): All guests will be required to submit a Covid Negative test report 72 hours prior to the start of the tour. If a guest tests positive, a full refund of the tour will be given or hold the entire amount as a travel credit to be used for a future tour.
6. Cancellation due to Covid (during the tour): In the unfortunate event that the guest tests positive during the tour, there will be no refund due for the remainder of the tour. Any additional costs of hotel quarantine / isolation will be applicable as required and has to be paid directly by the guest to the service providers
7. Cancellation due to state travel restrictions: In the event that the state we are travelling to imposes travel restrictions that makes it difficult to travel, we will refund the entire amount paid for the tour or hold the entire amount as a travel credit to be used for a future tour.
8. Refunds due can take upto 5 weeks to process.